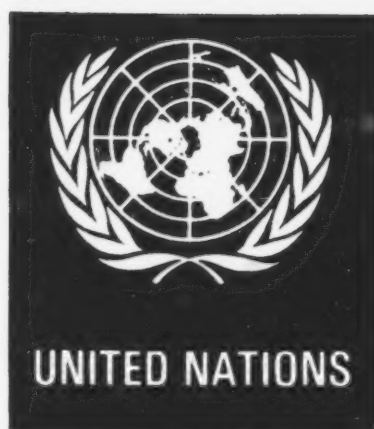




DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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*This bulletin, and back issues,
can be found in the Lotus Notes-based
United Nations Information System
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) at:
212-963-7197 (server: DPA4) as well as
on the Internet (<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/dpr/>).*

I. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 20 January 1997, the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following statement (GA/PAL/739):

The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, at its meeting on 20 January, was encouraged by the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, reached on 15 January, on the protocol concerning the redeployment of Israeli forces from the city of Hebron and the Note for the Record.

The Bureau of the Committee hopes that the conclusion of this agreement will lead to the full

implementation of the agreements already reached between the two parties, in particular the commencement of substantive negotiations on matters pertaining to the permanent settlement.

The Bureau of the Committee reaffirms its full support for the ongoing peace process and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and statehood.

On 19 February 1997, at its 227th meeting, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People opened its 1997 session with statements made by the Secretary-General, the Chairman of the Committee and the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

The Committee re-elected Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal) as Chairman as well as Bruno Rodriguez Parilla (Cuba) and Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairmen. It was decided that the election of the Rapporteur would take place at a later date. Introducing the Committee's draft programme of work, the Chairman paid tribute to Joseph Cassar (Malta), the outgoing Rapporteur of the Committee.

The Secretary-General's statement, as contained in press release SG/SM/6160-GA/PAL/740, and the statement made by Mr. Ka, translated from French, are reproduced below.

Secretary-General's statement

This is the first time that I am participating in a meeting of this Committee since my assumption of the duties of Secretary-General. I should like to express my appreciation to each of you for the commendable manner in which you have been carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to you by the General Assembly.

I should also like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your wise leadership of this Committee during the past year. This reflects the long-standing and consistent support that your great country has given to the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The General Assembly has, at its fifty-first session, reaffirmed the mandate from which this Committee derives. In the past few years, courageous new steps have been taken in the Middle East as a result of the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991, the signing by the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, and subsequent agreements, in particular the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And only last month the peace process gained important momentum as a result of the agreement reached on the Hebron Protocol and the Israeli and Palestinian undertakings on other key issues. I take this opportunity to renew my congratulations to

Chairman Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the progress they have made together.

These arrangements reached over the last three and a half years are signposts of crucial importance along the road towards peaceful Israeli-Palestinian coexistence. They have led to the emergence of new realities on the ground, such as the establishment of an elected Palestinian administration in Gaza and parts of the West Bank last year. At times there have been setbacks. But, by and large, the vision inherent in the Declaration of Principles has been sustained. It is now of the utmost importance not to dissipate those achievements, but to build on them in order to fulfil the hopes of all the peoples of the region. For the Middle East peace process to flourish, progress is also required in the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks. This will be crucial for the realization of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It is my earnest hope that these negotiations will resume quickly.

Promoting Palestinian economic and social development is essential in order to improve living conditions, especially in Gaza, and to create solid foundations for peace. The United Nations system is making an important contribution in this area, with a special emphasis on employment-generation and Palestinian institution-building. But we can do more. I have just appointed Chinmaya R. Gharekhan as Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. In the weeks ahead, he will work closely with the Palestinian Authority to identify areas in which the United Nations can enhance its contribution in the economic and social fields.

Allow me once again to express appreciation for the efforts of this Committee in our common pursuit of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. I am especially grateful for the flexibility the Committee has shown in response to the financial crisis, by exercising restraint in its use of the resources allocated to it. Mr. Chairman,

I wish you and each of the Committee Members well in the challenging work before you.

Committee Chairman's statement
[Translated from French]

Mr. Secretary-General,
Dear colleagues, members of the Committee,

I should like, on behalf of the members of the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and on my own behalf, to express our sincere thanks and profound gratitude for the confidence which you have again demonstrated in us, by re-electing us.

This great honour, which in bestowing on our humble selves you have bestowed on our respective countries, carries with it special responsibilities the extent of which we are fully conscious of at this decisive phase in the history of the Palestinian people.

Your decision also reflects your wish to preserve the continuity of our common action within the Committee to fulfil its mandate, which is to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and also to mobilize the support and assistance of the international community for the Palestinian people.

Rest assured that we will spare no effort to continue making a strong contribution to the search for peace, security and stability in this long-troubled region.

I know that I can rely on the experience, dedication and determination of each and every member of the Committee as we continue working together to win acceptance for the position of principle which the General Assembly forcefully reaffirmed when it renewed our Committee's mandate at its current session.

On behalf of all the members of the Committee, I should like to thank you, Mr. Secretary-General, most sincerely, for being with us

this afternoon, your busy schedule notwithstanding. Your presence is proof of the special interest which you, personally, take in the question of Palestine.

We are gratified and encouraged by your support for the Committee's activities in the exercise of its mandate, the purpose of these activities being, in fact, simply to contribute to the peaceful and just solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with international legality.

Recent political events have enabled us to judge just how the question of Palestine remains at the heart of the Middle East conflict and just how much the peace and stability of the region depend on a just and comprehensive settlement of this question in accordance with international agreements and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

The conclusion on 15 January by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the agreement on Hebron which the Committee welcomed, and the recent release of the Palestinian women political prisoners strengthens our conviction that, with the firm determination and encouragement of all those who are friends of peace, there is no obstacle to the full implementation of the agreements which cannot be surmounted.

As you know, the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements marked the start of a new page in a crucial chapter of the Middle East peace process, the chapter of substantive negotiations on issues relating to the final status.

As you have also, no doubt, noted, the course of the peace process in the Middle East has demonstrated that the parties involved need, in this difficult undertaking, the encouragement and support of all who, within the international community and particularly within the context of the United Nations, are working to bring about peace. That is why at this sensitive phase of the opening of negotiations on the delicate issues of the final settlement, the international community must, above all, intensify its efforts to support and sustain the

process in order to fully restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The presence of the Secretary-General among us and the important statement he has just made are proof, if any proof were needed, of the priority given to the question of Palestine in the agenda of the United Nations, the Organization that bears primary responsibility in the search for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

I must therefore emphasize the invaluable role played by the United Nations and the commendable efforts of its Secretary-General to consolidate peace through the effective and coordinated work carried out every day, in the field, for the benefit of the distressed Palestinian population.

This year will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the military occupation of the Palestinian territories and Jerusalem and the fiftieth anniversary of the resolution on partition.

We hope that it will also herald significant and irreversible progress towards the creation of the future independent Palestinian State and the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region, a peace that will benefit all those peoples who have made priceless contributions to the world.

We, for our part, will continue within the Committee, in close cooperation with the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Ambassador Al-Kidwa, to work steadily to strengthen our working relations with all United Nations bodies, with all Member States and with non-governmental organizations that are interested in the question of Palestine, in order to make our modest contribution to the attainment of the final goals of peace, stability, security and cooperation for the development of the immense potential of all the countries in the region.

Before concluding, I should like to thank all the non-governmental organizations all over the world that are working to defend and to promote recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people. I should also like to thank the Department of Public

Information, which is responsible for implementing the special training programme, and to underscore the importance of heightening the international community's awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine.

The Committee also adopted its programme of work for 1997, which is reproduced below as contained in document A/AC.183/1997/CRP.1, dated 27 January 1997, as amended.

Programme of work for 1997 of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

I. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

1. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for 1997 is contained in General Assembly resolutions 51/23, 51/24 and 51/25 of 4 December 1996.

2. In paragraphs 2 to 4 of resolution 51/23, the General Assembly considered that the Committee could continue to make a valuable and positive contribution to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements ^{1/} and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period; endorsed the Committee's recommendations;^{2/} and requested the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate.

^{1/} A/48/486-S/26560, annex.

^{2/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/51/35), chap. VII.

Finally, I am pleased in particular to express my warm thanks to the entire staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights for their dedication, hard work and efficiency in carrying out the many activities of the Committee and its Bureau.

3. In paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the General Assembly authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it may consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-second session and thereafter.

4. In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and promoting support and assistance to meet the needs of the Palestinian people and to take the necessary steps to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work.

5. In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other United Nations bodies associated with the question of Palestine to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to it, at its request, the relevant information and documentation, which they have at their disposal.

6. Resolution 51/24 deals with the work programme of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. In paragraph 2 of the resolution, the General Assembly considered that the Division for

Palestinian Rights continued to make a useful and constructive contribution through the organization of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, as well as through its research and monitoring activities, the preparation of studies and publications, and the collection and dissemination of information in printed and electronic form on all issues pertaining to the question of Palestine. In paragraph 3, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources, including for the further development of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), and to ensure that it continues to discharge the tasks detailed in the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance.

7. Resolution 51/25 deals with the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. In paragraph 1, the General Assembly noted that several defined provisions of that programme were yet to be implemented, and stressed the importance of implementation of all provisions of the programme. In paragraph 2, the Assembly considered that the programme was very useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general, including the achievements of the peace process, and that it was contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. In paragraph 3, the Assembly requested the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme for the biennium 1996-1997, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America, and indicated a set of activities to be carried out under the programme.

II. PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 1997

8. In the recommendations contained in its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, the Committee welcomed further positive developments in the peace process. It voiced its serious concern, however, at the renewed cycle of violence in the area, delays in the implementation of the agreements reached, the prolonged closure of the territories and the resumption of the settlement policy. The Committee noted that the year 1997 would mark the thirtieth anniversary of the military occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 181 (II) and expressed the view that those anniversaries should provide an impetus for intensified international action during the year.

9. The Committee reaffirmed that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination. As the organ of the General Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, the Committee's role continues to be useful and necessary during the transitional period and until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved.

10. While remaining firm on this position of principle, the Committee has continued to make adjustments in its approach and programme of work in order to respond to the new realities on the ground and to make a concrete contribution to the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

11. In 1997, in accordance with the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, the Committee will continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the effective implementation of the agreements reached between the parties, and will mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. The Committee will continue to cooperate with Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations system organizations in carrying out its mandate.

12. The Committee will continue to take steps to enhance its effectiveness and achieve optimal utilization of available resources in the accomplishment of its increased tasks in the light of changing political circumstances, while keeping in mind the continued financial crisis of the Organization.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE AND THE DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

A. Action by the Committee

13. The Committee will continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate. The Committee will also continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, requiring international action. The Committee, through its Chairman, will continue to participate in relevant meetings of the Security Council and various intergovernmental bodies, as considered necessary.

14. The Committee will continue to expand its contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including non-governmental organizations, in the areas under its jurisdiction. The Committee will consider inviting Palestinian Authority officials and other Palestinian

personalities to special meetings of the Committee in order to apprise Committee members and other delegations of the important developments on the ground and the evolving needs of the Palestinian people to be met through international action. The Committee will continue to develop cooperation with and assistance to Palestinian non-governmental organizations, including participation in their meetings by the Committee or the staff of the Division. The Committee will also give consideration to the idea of sending a delegation to visit Gaza at an appropriate time.

15. Drawing on the experience of the previous year, the Committee requests the Division to continue its training programme for staff members of the Palestinian Authority aimed at providing them with better knowledge and understanding of the work and objectives of the United Nations. To achieve maximum effectiveness, the Committee requests that an internship for two officials be scheduled for a period of three months, in conjunction with the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

16. The Committee is aware of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 51/129 of 13 December 1996, entitled "Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues" and the request addressed to the Secretary-General in operative paragraph 2 "to preserve and modernize the existing records" of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine. The Committee agrees with the statement made by the sponsors of the resolution, who expressed the wish that the electronic facilities of the Division for Palestinian Rights be used for this purpose. The Committee is prepared to consider redeploying part of its available resources towards this additional task, provided that the Division for Palestinian Rights receives the full level of staffing and financial resources, as approved by the Assembly in the current budget. The Committee requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary decision in this regard. In the light of paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 51/23, mentioned above, the Committee requests the Division, in cooperation

with the relevant offices of the United Nations, to explore the various technical and other aspects involved in the implementation of this mandate.

B. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

17. The Committee attaches the greatest importance to UNISPAL, which was originally requested by the Committee and mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 46/74 B of 11 December 1991 and 47/64 B of 11 December 1992, and subsequent resolutions, and stresses the need for the system to be made more comprehensive. The Committee notes that despite the welcome progress made in developing and refining the system, its requests for the electronic conversion and inclusion in the system of all significant United Nations documents, dating back to 1947, totalling some 25,000 pages, have been only partially implemented because of staffing and financial constraints. Noting that it had requested the Secretariat to secure the services of an outside contractor to carry out part of this work by utilizing savings generated in its programme of work, the Committee requests the Division to make all efforts to proceed with the implementation of this aspect of UNISPAL on an urgent basis.

18. The Committee also stresses the urgent need for further development of the UNISPAL home page on the Internet, and requests the Division to take the necessary steps in that regard.

C. Seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations

19. The Committee is of the view that seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) convened under its auspices continue to be a useful mechanism for in-depth consideration of the priority issues, and it intends to continue to structure this programme for maximum usefulness, including the possibility of co-sponsoring those meetings with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and others.

20. Provision was made in the current programme budget for seven regional seminars, seven regional NGO symposiums, two international NGO meetings and four preparatory NGO meetings to be held during 1996-1997. In accordance with decisions taken in 1996, this programme was adjusted by providing for two meetings of consultations with non-governmental organizations during the biennium (instead of four preparatory meetings), by combining seminars, symposiums and NGO meetings, to the extent possible, and by adjusting their periodicity. It is expected that this streamlining will continue to sharpen the focus and increase the usefulness of these meetings while reducing overall expenditure. The Committee will also strive, in cooperation with prospective host countries and institutions, and the competent Secretariat services, to limit costs for conference facilities, equipment and servicing staff, while ensuring the success of the meetings.

21. Accordingly, the Committee decided to hold the following meetings in the course of 1997:

(a) Consultations with representatives of NGO coordinating committees, (3 and 4 February, United Nations Headquarters);

(b) Asian seminar and NGO symposium (Jakarta, date to be determined);

(c) Seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people (date and venue to be determined);

(d) North American NGO symposium, (9 to 11 June, United Nations Headquarters);

(e) International NGO meeting and European NGO symposium, August (date and venue to be determined).

22. With regard to other seminars and NGO meetings forecast in the budget for the biennium 1996-1997, the Committee decided, in the light of emerging priorities and concerns in its programme of work, as indicated above, as well as the continuing financial crisis of the Organization, not

to hold those meetings in 1997. The Committee accordingly requested the Secretariat to ensure that the resulting savings, to the extent necessary, be used to finance the new activities indicated in paragraphs 14 to 16 above, as well as the further development of UNISPAL (see paras. 17 and 18).

D. Research, monitoring, and publications

23. The Committee continues to attach great importance to the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine, and requests it to continue its programme of publications in consultation with the Committee. Noting increasing delays in the issuance of publications and the lack of availability of some older ones, the Committee requests the Division to take the necessary steps, in cooperation with the relevant technical Secretariat offices, to ensure that publications are issued promptly and that older ones are reprinted as necessary.

24. In accordance with existing mandates and earlier requests of the Committee, the Division's publications programme in 1997 will include the following:

(a) A monthly bulletin on activities by the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and others on the question of Palestine containing the texts of all relevant resolutions, statements and decisions;

(b) A periodic bulletin, entitled Developments related to the Middle East peace process, containing information on the peace process;

(c) A monthly chronological summary of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on news reports and other sources.

25. In addition, the Committee requests the Division to continue to prepare its informal periodic

summary of information on significant activities of non-governmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine for the information of the Committee and for communication to the network of non-governmental organizations.

26. The Division will also issue the reports of regional and international meetings, organized under the auspices of the Committee; a special bulletin on the observance in 1996 of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; and a compilation of relevant resolutions, decisions and statements adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council in 1996. The Division will update, as needed, its information notes on the work of the Committee and the Division, on the NGO programme of the Committee, and on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

27. With regard to the studies on fundamental issues requested by the Committee, the Committee requests the Division to ensure rapid publication of the study on Jerusalem and to complete its work on the draft study on Israeli settlements.

E. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

28. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on Monday, 1 December 1997. It is envisaged that the observance will take place at Headquarters, at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, and elsewhere in accordance with established practice.

29. The Committee has decided, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, to prepare a special programme for the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1997, including an exhibit to be displayed at United Nations Headquarters during the week of 1 to 7 December 1997, as well as to host a reception and organize other activities as appropriate.

Consultations with non-governmental organizations, 3 and 4 February 1997

A consultative meeting of representatives of NGO coordinating committees on the question of Palestine and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was held on 3 and 4 February 1997 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting discussed priorities of the future cooperation between the Committee and NGOs and made suggestions with regard to the programme of NGO events to be held in 1997 under the auspices of the Palestinian Rights Committee. Twenty-two NGO participants representing the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine and the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine attended the consultations. In consultation with the participating NGOs, it was decided that the North American NGO Symposium would be held at New York Headquarters from 9 to 11 June 1997, so as to coincide with observances of the thirtieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. Information about dates, venues and substantive themes for all NGO meetings, as envisaged in the programme of work, will be communicated in the next issue of the bulletin.

II. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND APPOINTS SPECIAL COORDINATOR IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

On 15 January 1997, the following statement on developments in the peace (SG/SM/6145) was issued by the Acting Spokesman for the Secretary-General:

The Secretary-General is very much encouraged by the conclusion of an agreement regarding Hebron and other important issues, which has now been reached between Israel and the Palestinians.

He considers this to be an important achievement, which he hopes will now pave the way for further progress towards the full implementation of the process envisaged in the Declaration of Principles agreed in Oslo.

On 6 February 1997, the Spokesman for the Secretary-General announced that Chinmaya R. Gharekhan (India) had been named the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, replacing Terje Roed Larsen (Norway). Gaza would be his base in the area. Mr. Gharekhan would also retain his post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East Peace Talks, a post he has held since 1993.

On 27 February 1997, the Associate Spokesman for the Secretary-General stated that the Secretary-General had learned with concern of the decision of the Government of Israel to proceed with construction at Har Homa. The Secretary-General considered unhelpful any action that might impede the final status negotiations scheduled to begin next month between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). No objective was more important than for the parties to find mutually agreeable solutions to the sensitive issues involved, including Jerusalem.

III. EXCERPT FROM FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ANNUAL COORDINATION MEETING OF THE MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On 2 October 1996, the Organization of Islamic Conference Annual Coordination Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs was held at the United Nations, New York. The meeting issued a final communiqué, including the following excerpt on the question of Palestine and Jerusalem (A/51/773-S/1997/43):

Question of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif

5. The Meeting endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Six-Member Committee on Palestine.
6. The Meeting endorsed the communiqué of the Six-Member Committee on the bloody events caused by Israel's opening of a tunnel in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which endangers Islamic and Christian holy shrines, especially the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and on the ensuring grave deterioration of the situation in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the other occupied Palestinian territories.
7. The Meeting issued a special declaration on the storming by the Israeli occupation authorities into the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
8. The Meeting endorsed resolution 1073 (1996) adopted on 28 September 1996 by the Security Council, on the serious deterioration of the situation in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the other occupied Palestinian territories. It called for action by the international community to force Israel to close the tunnel immediately and put an end to its aggressions against the Palestinian people.
9. The Meeting called for continued support for the PLO and its position in the negotiations with Israel aimed at establishing the PLO's authority over all Palestinian territory, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as one geographical entity, ensuring the transfer of all powers and responsibilities in all fields to the Palestinian National Authority and extending support in all areas to enable it to remove the vestiges of Israeli occupation, establish Palestinian national institutions and realize the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to return, to self-determination and to establish its own independent State on its national soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.
10. The Meeting reaffirmed its support for the Middle East peace process and the implementation of all the agreements signed and the commitments made in this context between the parties concerned, in accordance with the underpinnings of the process launched in Madrid, especially the principle of land for peace and the United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) which demand Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupied Lebanese territory; and the realization of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.
11. The Meeting reaffirmed that Al-Quds Al-Sharif forms an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and whatever is applicable to other occupied Palestinian territories also applies to it in implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly; it urged action to halt all measures, practices and decisions adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif aimed at altering the City's geographic and demographic set-up and violating Islamic and Christian Holy Places therein with a view to Judaizing the Holy City; and called for redoubling efforts to restore Al-Quds Al-Sharif to Palestinian sovereignty as the capital of the State of Palestine, so as to ensure peace and security in the region.

12. The Meeting invited the international community, in particular the two sponsors of the Peace Conference and the States of the European Union, to compel Israel to cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan and to adopt firm positions towards those measures, which contravene international resolutions, including Security Council resolution 465 (1980), and the principles of international law, as well as the agreements signed between the Palestinian and Israeli parties, and which constitute a serious and real threat to the entire peace process. It requested the Security Council to set up an international monitoring committee to prevent the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories.

13. The Meeting called for action within United Nations and international institutions and forums to compel Israel to release the detainees; return the deportees; halt the methods of mass punishment; cease the confiscation of lands and properties and the demolition of homes; and cease any actions that threaten life and the environment in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. To call for a more effective United Nations action to ensure the success of the Middle East peace process, for a reaffirmation of the United Nations responsibility for the cause of Palestine until a just and comprehensive solution to all its aspects is found, a solution that puts an end to occupation and fulfils the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

14. The Meeting recommended that, in the event of a total breakdown of the peace process, the possibility of re-examining the normalization of relations with Israel should be considered and that consultations should be held on this question at the appropriate time.

15. The Meeting urged the international community and the Security Council to compel Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 487 (1981); to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Arms; to implement the decisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which call for subjecting all Israeli nuclear facilities to the Agency's System of Comprehensive Safeguards; that Israel should declare its renunciation of nuclear armament and submit a complete statement on its stockpile of nuclear weapons and materials to the Security Council and IAEA. This step is essential for establishing an area free from weapons of mass-destruction, including, in particular, nuclear weapons in the Middle East, and for bringing about a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

16. The Meeting stressed the need to coordinate the positions of Member States so as to maintain the principled stand of the Organization of the Islamic Conference vis-à-vis all the resolutions concerning the cause of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which are submitted for discussion to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

IV. EXCERPTS FROM COMMUNIQUÉ ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE DAMASCUS DECLARATION STATES

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Damascus Declaration States held their fourteenth meeting on 28 and 29 December 1996 in Cairo and adopted a final communiqué (document A/51/768-S/1997/4), excerpts from which are reproduced below:

The Ministers reaffirmed their countries' firm stance with regard to developments in the peace process, and the need to adhere to the authoritative

bases on which it has been based since the Madrid Conference. Of particular relevance were Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and

425 (1978); the principle of land for peace; complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights to the 4 June 1967 line; complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa to the internationally recognized boundaries; complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territory, including Arab Jerusalem, and the guarantee of legitimate national rights for the Palestinian people, including the right of self-determination and to establish an independent State on its own national soil. The Ministers affirmed their absolute support for the Palestinians' position, their efforts to effect Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian land, and safeguard security and the rights of their people.

...

The Ministers stressed the importance of resuming negotiations and making rapid progress on all Arab-Israeli tracks, building on the progress and results that had been achieved. They similarly affirmed the need for Israel to abide by all the commitments that it had made as part of the peace process.

The Ministers referred to the wide international support for the Arab claim, and commended the positive development in the role of Europe, reflected in the statements issued by the European Union. In this context, the Ministers expressed their especial appreciation of the role of France, under President Jacques Chirac. They also expressed their appreciation of the statements made by the President of the United States of America, William Clinton, regarding Israeli settlement policy, and requested the United States to ensure that American financial aid was not used to implement that policy. They further requested the United States, in its capacity as a co-

sponsor of the peace process, to adopt a stance that would ensure that the policy of expanding Israeli settlements on occupied Arab land would cease, and that the peace process would return to its proper course.

The Ministers affirmed their commitment to legitimate international resolutions requiring the non-recognition of any situation resulting from Israeli settlement activity, and declared that the establishment of settlements and the introduction of settlers were illegitimate acts that constituted a violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Madrid framework, in addition to threatening to bring about the collapse of the peace process.

The Ministers reaffirmed the declaration made by the most recent Arab Summit Conference, namely, that Israeli Government insistence on its position could lead to the destruction of the peace process. This would have dangerous consequences, might return the region to a vortex of violence, and force a number of Arab States to begin to reconsider the steps taken vis-à-vis Israel in the framework of that peace process. The Israeli Government alone would bear the entire responsibility for such a situation.

The Ministers asserted that the establishment of truly cooperative relations between regional parties in the Middle East was subject to complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land, and the achievement by the Palestinian people of their legitimate national rights, in order that a climate of peace, security and stability could prevail in the region.

V. GROUP OF ARAB STATES CALLS ON SECURITY COUNCIL TO TAKE ACTION ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

On 21 February 1997, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, in his capacity as chairman of the Group of Arab States members of the League of Arab States, addressed identical letters to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council (A/51/805-S/1997/149), reproduced below:

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States members of the League of Arab States, I wish once again to inform you, on behalf of the Group, of its great concern at the attitude of Israel, the occupying Power, which, persisting in its policy, continues to take illegal measures against the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, as well as the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, inter alia, by continuing with the construction of settlements. These actions, which constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Rules of 1907, as well as of the many resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, seriously endanger the peace process in the Middle East and the integrity of the accords concluded in that respect between the parties.

The Arab Group wishes in particular to draw attention to the policies and illegal measures taken by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem, aimed at Judaizing the City and changing its legal status and demographic composition. Jerusalem is of vital importance to the Arab world and the world of Islam, and is also important to the international community and the three major religions. Thus, Israel's policies and actions in Jerusalem are extremely dangerous. In this connection, the Israeli authorities have confirmed their decision to build a new settlement to the south of East Jerusalem, specifically in the Jabal Abu Ghneim region. This action is a sequel to a series of decisions taken by Israel, such as the decision to build a new settlement in the Ras al-Amud region, within the original frontiers of the municipality of East Jerusalem. In this connection, I wish to refer to the letter from the Chairman of the Group of Arab States for December 1996, which deals with the same subject (S/1996/1047 of 17 December 1996). In addition, the Israeli authorities have kept open the tunnel

located within the Haram al-Sharif, Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) on this subject notwithstanding. I would also recall that Israel has destroyed the building belonging to the Burj al-Laqlaq association, located within the Old City, where it would appear that a new Jewish settlement is to be constructed. Furthermore, Israel is continuing to deprive the Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are the original inhabitants of the City, of their "right of residence", in the context of what appears to be an underhand campaign aimed at driving the Palestinian Arab inhabitants out of Jerusalem. Furthermore, Israel is continuing to isolate East Jerusalem from the other regions of the West Bank and to deny access to it by Palestinians, despite everything the City represents for the Palestinian people in religious, cultural, intellectual and economic terms.

The international community, including the Security Council, has taken a very firm attitude towards the above-mentioned policies and actions, which it has described as null and void, calling on Israel to put an end to them. The Group of Arab States Members of the United Nations wishes to insist on the vital importance of the issue, and requests the Security Council to take the necessary steps to induce Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its policies and actions, and in particular definitively to renounce any settlement activity, particularly in the Jabal Abu Ghneim and Ras al-Amud region. The Group of Arab States wishes to reaffirm that any failure in this area risks having serious consequences and disastrous sequels.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 33, 35 and 85 of the agenda for the fifty-first session, and of the Security Council.

VI. LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES ISSUES COMMUNIQUÉ ON JERUSALEM

On 23 February 1997, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States issued the following communiqué (A/51/808-S/1997/157):

The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States takes note with grave anxiety of the decision of the Israeli authorities to establish in the southern part of East Jerusalem, and specifically in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area, a new settlement consisting of 600 housing units, with the aim of tightening the stranglehold on Al-Quds. Likewise, despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) on this subject, the Israeli authorities have kept open the tunnel situated within the Haram al-Sharif (the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock). Moreover, Israel continues to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, declaring it off-limits to Palestinians and withdrawing residence permits for the City's original Arab inhabitants, which constitutes a deliberate "transfer" operation designed to encourage Jewish settlement in the City and to impose a *fait accompli* prior to the opening of the final status negotiations in March.

The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States stresses that the actions taken by the Israeli authorities to increase the flow of settlers into Al-Quds and the occupied Syrian Arab Golan constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 and a serious infringement of

the resolutions adopted by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, on the Israeli-Arab conflict and the question of Palestine. The General Secretariat refers in this context to the resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its special session held on 6 May 1995, in which the Council reaffirmed that under no circumstances would it recognize the actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, designed to change the legal status, geographical nature and demographic composition of Al-Quds, and called upon countries throughout the world to refuse to recognize such changes, while deciding to keep the matter under review. The General Secretariat stresses that the persistence of Israel in establishing settlements in the occupied Arab territories will have awkward consequences for the peace process. Accordingly, the Security Council and the co-sponsors of the peace process, particularly the United States of America, are urged to take prompt action to compel Israel to desist from these settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories in general, and in Al-Quds in particular, in view of that City's crucial importance to the Arab world and the Islamic world and to the international community and the three revealed religions.

VII. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

1. Tanmiya, a quarterly newsletter on Palestinian development, issued by the Welfare Association at Geneva, Switzerland, in its issue no. 45 of December 1996 has a special report on sustained development of the Palestinian economy (Fax: 41 22 786 5345).

2. Article 74, published in Jerusalem, P.O. Box 31417, Fax No. 02 6253 151, in its issue no. 18 of

December 1996 has an article on stop ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem.

3. News from Within, in its volume XIII, no. 1, of January 1997, has articles on ideological biases in research on Arab-Palestinians in Israel and the identity and political orientation of Arab-Palestinians in Israel (Fax: 972 2 625 3151).

4. Middle East International, in its issue no. 542 of 24 January 1997, includes an article on a Hebron deal at last, unfinished struggle - Arafat after Hebron and America's decisive role (P.O. Box 53365, Temple Heights Station, Washington, D.C. 20009).

5. News from Within, in its volume XIII, no. 2, of February 1997, has articles on the unfinished struggle against occupation, a victory for the Palestinian youth movement and the Palestinian national movement and its strategy for the land (Fax: 972 2 625 3151).

6. Al Haq, in a press release issued on 20 February 1997, has an article on Palestinian

prisoners going on a one-day hunger strike (Fax: 972 2 995 4903).

7. Challenge, in its January-February 1997 edition, no. 41, has articles on the race for the finals and what does Netanyahu want? Copies are available from P.O. Box 41199, Jaffa, 61411, Israel.

8. MECC news report, in its volume 9 of January-February 1997, has articles on Christians and Muslims meeting to talk about the future of the Holy City of Jerusalem and United States policy on a value scale (Fax: 5 324 496).
